

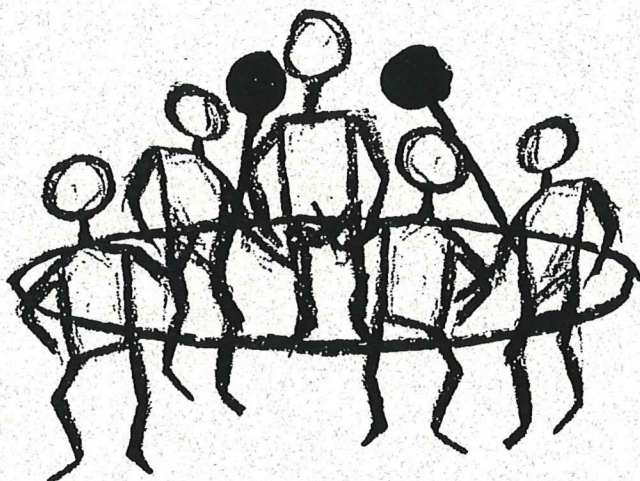
Faculty of Music

University of Toronto

Faculty Artist Series

# NEXUS

Percussion Ensemble



**Bob Becker, Bill Cahn, Robin Engelman,  
Russell Hartenberger & John Wyre**

**Saturday, September 23  
8 pm**

**Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building**

## **Programme**

**A Tribute to Earle Birney**

**Nexus**

**Mbiri Kuna Mwari**

**Lee Kesselman**

**The Toronto Children's Chorus  
Jean Ashworth-Bartle, conductor**

**Mbira**

**Nexus**

**Wright's Lessons**

**William Cahn  
(b. 1946)**

**Ubu Quartet  
Marie Bérard, violin; Dominique LaPlante, violin  
Douglas Perry, viola; Bryan Epperson, cello**

**The Toronto Children's Chorus  
Jean Ashworth-Bartle, conductor**

**James Kippen, narrator**

## **Intermission**

**Mitsue**

**World Premiere**

**John Wyre  
(b. 1941)**

**One Last Bar Then Joe Can Sing**

**Gavin Bryars  
(b. 1943)**

## Programme Notes

Mbiri Kuna Mwari

Lee Kesselman  
text from the Shona Mass

*Mbiri Kuna Mwari* is composed in the spirit of choral music the composer heard at the Episcopal Cathedral in Harare, Zimbabwe, in summer of 1993. Shona is the majority tribe in Zimbabwe and its language. The text is the Shona translation of the opening section of the *Gloria of the Mass Ordinary*.

Mbira

NEXUS

*Mbira* is the name of the traditional "thumb piano" of Zimbabwe. NEXUS has developed a piece around the mbira which conveys the beauty and joy of traditional Shona music.

Wright's Lessons (1995)

William Cahn

The first movement of *Wright's Lessons* was completed in July, 1995. The work is still in progress at the time of this performance. The text is derived from a reader for children written by Albert D. Wright and published in 1846. The title of the book is "Wright's Primary Lessons" and its purpose was to introduce the children to reading and spelling. The child-size book was also illustrated with drawings relating to the lessons, and it was intended for both family and school applications.

Essentially, Wright's idea was to teach the alphabet by the *sound* (or power, as Wright called it) of each letter, rather than by the letter's name, as is done today in the alphabet song, for example. Wright presented one letter at a time in each lesson, and by quickly forming little words and constructing easy sentences, the book was able to render a simple kind of children's poetry, sometimes with a non-linear flow of words. The alphabet lessons eventually led to full reading lessons of original stories.

It was of additional interest to the composer to learn that Albert Wright may have been a distant relation. It is known that an Albert was born into the Wright branch of the composer's family in the early 1800s in Maryland, but whether or not this was the author of "Wright's Primary Lessons" is not known.



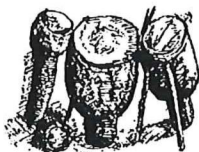
"Nexus" comes from the latin language and means "link" or "connection"; "Mitsue" comes from the Cree Language and means "meeting Places". Like NEXUS, *Mitsue* points to music's ability to bring diverse elements together.

In our travels, NEXUS has interacted with many musicians, and the initial inspiration to begin this piece was the artistry of Thomas Stacey, master of the English horn. The solo line can be performed by a variety of instruments, however, and for this premiere performance the vibraphone will carry the melody.

One Last Bar Then Joe Can Sing (1994)  
(A Homage to Deagan)

Gavin Bryars

Written for the virtuoso percussion quintet NEXUS to whom it is dedicated, this piece is a reflection on aspects of percussion history, both personal and musical. The members of NEXUS are my personal friends (I played in the Steve Reich Ensemble with Russ Hartenberger in 1972) and I have known their playing as an ensemble for more than 15 years. What I chose to focus on relates more to their musicality than their extraordinary musical skills. The piece starts from the last bar at the end of the first part of my opera *Medea*, a very short coda for percussion quintet (untuned) which is progressively fragmented until it is taken over by the tuned percussion instruments gradually evolving into an extended aria for the "Songbells" with other metallophones. The piece serves as a kind of homage to the instrument maker J.C. Deagan - the Stradivarius of the tuned percussion family and close collaborator with Percy Grainger in the development of tuned percussion music between the wars. The rare 3-octave set of "Songbells" which NEXUS owns is one of his particularly fine instruments.



## The Toronto Children's Chorus

During the past sixteen years the Toronto Children's Chorus has developed a world-renowned reputation for excellence. Jean Ashworth-Bartle founded the choir in 1978 and it has now grown to include more than 300 children, ranging from 5 to 16 years of age. The Chorus has won awards in many national and international choral competitions, including a first prize in the 1993 *Let the Peoples Sing* competition.

The Chorus has performed for the delight of audiences and critics. In May, 1994 the Chorus gave a triumphant performance in its debut at Carnegie Hall, New York. In addition, they were artists-in-residence at the Tuscany International Children's Chorus Festival, where a dozen choirs from around the world performed.

The music the Toronto Children's Chorus sings is drawn from a wide range of musical styles, from sacred works of the Renaissance, to the most challenging contemporary pieces from many different cultures and traditions. Many Canadian composers have been inspired to create works and arrangements especially for the choir. In April 1995 the Chorus premiered *Cantate Domino* by the British Columbia-based composer Imant Raminsh. Among the many recordings the Chorus has made are three recent compact discs: *Mostly Britten*, and *Dancing Day* (Marquis Classics) and *Adeste Fideles* (CBC records). The most recent recording by the Toronto Children's Chorus, *Along the Road to Bethlehem* (CBC Records), will be released this fall.

### Jean Ashworth-Bartle

Since the founding of the Toronto Children's Chorus in 1978, an ensemble which has become the model for children's choirs everywhere, Jean Ashworth-Bartle has become one of the foremost conductors of treble voice choirs in the world. This past season, she gave masterclasses, workshops and guest conducted in Melbourne, Australia at the *Let the Peoples Sing* conference. She also directed the fifth annual International Children's Choir Festival in Carnegie Hall, and was the Master Conductor at the highly successful Inaugural International Children's Choir Festival in Tuscany. This season she has been invited back to Carnegie Hall, and has been asked to direct an International Children's Choir Festival in Prague, Brno and Vienna. She will also guest conduct and adjudicate children's choirs in Hong Kong.

In addition to her conducting and teaching in North America, Ms. Ashworth-Bartle also edits the Jean Ashworth-Bartle series for Treble Voices (Hinshaw Music) and the Toronto Children's Chorus Series (G.V. Thompson/Warner-Chapell). She is the author of the book *Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors*.

## The Ubu Quartet

Marie Bérard, violin

In April of 1993, Ms. Bérard was appointed to the position of Concertmaster of the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra. Prior to this appointment, she was a member of the first violin section of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. As an interpreter of new music, she is in great demand, recently performing solo sonatas by Bright Cheng, Anthony Davis at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto. She has recorded numerous works by Alfred Schnittke. This summer, Ms. Bérard recorded the famed violin solo, *Meditation from Thais* with orchestra by Massenet for SM 5000.

Dominique Laplante, violin

Dominique Laplante plays regularly with many Toronto ensembles including the Canadian Opera Company, ESPRIT Orchestra and the Composers' Orchestra. She holds the position of Principal Second Violin with the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra.

Douglas Perry, viola

Former Artistic Director of Arraymusic, he is also a founding member of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra with whom he recorded over 20 CDs for Sony and BMG. He premiered John Beckwith's viola concerto *Peregrine* with Toronto's ESPRIT Orchestra, and gave the Canadian premiere of Luciano Berio's viola concerto *Voce* // in 1994 with the same orchestra. He is currently Principal Viola of the Canadian Opera Orchestra as well as being on the Steering Committee of ArtsVote, an arts coalition working within the political realm.

Bryan Epperson, cello

Bryan Epperson, Principal Cello of the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, and lecturer at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto has played in the Philadelphia Orchestra and has led cello sections of the Cincinnati Symphony, the Opera Company of Boston and the Sante Fe Opera. Under the auspices of Claudio Abbado, he made his solo debuts in Milan, Venice, Florence and Siena. He also teaches in Courtenay, B.C., the Britt Festival in Oregon, and the Mozart in Monterey Festival, as well as the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

James Kippen, narrator

James Kippen is an associate professor of music (ethnomusicology) in the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. He attained his Ph.D. from Queen's University, Belfast in 1985 and joined the faculty in 1990. He specializes in the theory and performance of North Indian classical music and in particular its virtuosic drumming traditions. He is the author of *The Tabla of Lucknow: A Cultural Analysis of a Musical Tradition* (Cambridge U Press, 1988).



## NEXUS

Bob Becker, William Cahn, Robin Engelman,  
Russell Hartenberger, John Wyre

Welcome to the start of NEXUS' 25th concert season!

Formed in 1971, NEXUS has come to be recognized as one of the foremost chamber ensembles in the world. The five members have developed a unique repertoire and rapport, allowing audiences to enter, experience, and enjoy the special world that is a NEXUS concert.

NEXUS performs a wide and eclectic range of music, much of which has been recorded on an extensive and growing list of compact discs. Their solo concert repertoire includes works by some of the world's most famous composers, early 20th-century ragtime music, ethnic music, composition by members of NEXUS and group improvisations. Their distinctive repertoire for major orchestras, include the Boston Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the orchestras of Anchorage, Atlanta, Dallas, Detroit, Memphis, Ottawa and St. Paul. Their programs for children, teenagers, and young adults introduce the broad and colourful range of percussion instruments and music in a delightful and entertaining style.

Since 1975 the group has traveled extensively. NEXUS' 25th anniversary season will include solo recitals and appearances with symphony orchestras in Canada, the United States, Finland, Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Norway, and at the International Percussion Festival in Taipei.

Toronto appearances during this celebratory year include: December 12 - "From Rags to Riches" at the Glenn Gould Theatre; January 19 - as guests of the Elmer Iseler Singers at St. Patrick's Church; March 29 - with Esprit Orchestra at the Jane Mallett Theatre in the world premiere of *Tallbrem Variations* by Canadian composer Bruce Mather and on May 21, 1996, the gala *Twenty-fifth Anniversary Concert*, location TBA, with many guests.

The recipient of the Toronto Arts Award in 1989, NEXUS has also received the support of the Canada Council, the Canada Council Touring Office, the Government of Canada Department of External Affairs, the Ontario Arts Council, The Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, the Arts Council of Great Britain, the New York State Council for the Arts, the Western States Arts Federation and the Connecticut Commission on the Arts.

Upcoming Concerts  
in the  
FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

**Thursday, October 5 at 8 pm**

Collegium Musicum

*The Glory of 17th-century Italy*

Kevin Mallon, violin; Terry McKenna, theorbo  
Charlotte Nediger, organ; Anne Monoyios, soprano  
Timothy McGee, narrator

**Saturday, October 28 at 8 pm**

John Kruspe, pianist

Beethoven: Sonata in E flat, Op. 7

Brahms: Scherzo in E flat minor, Op. 4 & Klavierstücke, Op. 119

Chopin: Barcarolle, P. 60 & Scherzo in C sharp minor, Op. 39

Schubert: Sonata in G, D.V. 894, Op. 78

**Monday, October 30 at 8 pm**

Music with Friends

Chamber Music by Gary Kulesha

with guests: Stephen Clarke, David Bourque,  
Barbara Hannigan, Sifauna Rolston & Mark Skazinetzsky

All Faculty Artist Series Concerts are held in  
Walter Hall

Tickets \$15/10 - Box Office 978-3744